THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Studying the Needs and Experiences of Beginning Teachers

By

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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In

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the reasons that may be linked to the high levels of beginning teacher attrition occurring in Alberta, Canada. The study was focused on generating a greater understanding of the needs, experiences and stressors of new teachers today, to assist the schools and school boards in working towards promoting increased retention among those new to the profession. Forty-four first and second year teachers from Edmonton schools voluntarily completed a survey designed by the researcher. The survey itself was found to be a reliable research instrument, although due to a limited sample size no validity evidence was determined. The results of the study indicated that beginning teachers need more assistance in the area of classroom adjustment and find the issues of workload, student needs, discipline and assessment to be the most stressful aspects of their job. Finally, the results show the significant impact that administrative support has on new teacher job satisfaction.

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1 1
Introduction 1
Rationale 1
Research questions and organization 5
Method 6
Procedure 6
Participants 7
Research instrument 8
Ethical Considerations 9
Questionnaire development 11
Results 17
Limitations 19
References 22
CHAPTER 2 24
Support and assistance needed by beginning teachers 24
Method 26
Respondents 26
Measures 26
Procedure 27
Results 28
Descriptive statistics 28
Correlations 29
Dependent t tests 30
Qualitative Results 31
Discussion 33
References 39
CHAPTER 3 41
Principals play a key role in new teacher happiness 41
Who took part in the study? 41
What did the study involve? 42
What were the important findings? 42
So what are the implications? 44
References 46
CHAPTER 4 47
Discussion and Implications 47
Summary of the research findings 48
Survey Development 49
The hardships and stresses facing new teachers 49
Factors resulting in a positive experience 51
Informing teachers, principals and school boards 52
Implications of the current study 52
Suggestions for future research 54

Concluding comments 55
APPENDIX A 56
Beginning Teacher Survey 56
APPENDIX B 71
Information Letters for Administrators and Beginning Teachers 71
APPENDIX C 76
Ethical Approval From 76
APPENDIX D 78
Cooperative Activities Program 78
APPENDIX E 87
Questionnaire Items 87

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Rationale

The importance of studying the needs and experiences of beginning teachers stems not only from current statistics and literature, but also from personal experience. Having had a difficult and overwhelming first year in the profession and having shared similar experiences with many of the new teachers I encountered made me want to explore the ways in which the induction process could be improved. After only one year of teaching, I knew of several fellow graduates who were leaving the profession and many more who were largely dissatisfied with their first year. Knowing many of these teachers personally, I remember feeling disappointed that we had successful student teaching experiences and had all been passionate about becoming educators. After only one year, that energy, spark and enthusiasm had been dimmed. It came as no surprise that the Canadian Teachers' Federation (2001) indicated that 30 percent of beginning teachers leave in the first five years. With this high level of new teacher resignation and the high levels of teacher retirement, as of September 2001 there was a shortage of 20,000 teachers across Canada (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2001). Evidently, studying the needs of beginning teachers is becoming crucial. In order to be able to provide beginning teachers with positive, successful experiences, we must first understand where they require more support and assistance and in which areas they are experiencing the most stress. Further, understanding the elements that contribute to a satisfying beginning year would

enable the development of more successful induction processes. This in turn might influence new teacher retention.

The literature in this area contains numerous articles about studies conducted in the United States where the focus is on exploring the reasons behind beginning teacher stress, burnout and attrition. Many emphasize the significance of administrative support on beginning teacher satisfaction (Karge, 1993; Marlow & Inman, 1997), as well as their decision-making ability (Weiss, 1999), the school environment and climate (Hewitt, 1993; Karge, 1993; Weiss, 1999), the low pay (Hewitt, 1993; Marlow & Inman, 1997), their heavy workload (Ganser, 1999; Hewitt, 1993) and their sense of frustration and isolation (Easley, 2000). However, after searching the academic literature as well as the information held by different Teacher Associations and colleges in Canada, it has not been possible to locate any recent Canadian studies that have statistics on the stressors, experiences and needs of beginning teachers in this country. The factors may or may not be the same for teachers here.

There are Canadian articles that reveal the levels of attrition and shortages of beginning teachers, but they do not provide information about the rationale behind the numbers. It is interesting that the 2000 National Issues in Education Poll, conducted for the Canadian Teachers' Federation, indicates that over 80% of Canadians believe that large classes, heavy work loads and lack of resources are contributing to beginning teacher attrition. Further, two thirds of Canadians believe beginning teachers are leaving due to being underpaid relative to other professionals (Canadian

Teachers' Federation, 2000). However, it would be important to survey beginning teachers themselves in order to examine the validity of these beliefs.

The purpose of this project was to study the factors that may be linked to attrition among beginning teachers in the Edmonton area. The first aim was to learn more about the hardships and stresses facing new teachers to better understand their needs. The second was to develop a better understanding of the factors that resulted in a positive first year experience. Finally, the aim was to present the data collected in the survey to participating school boards in order to help further their knowledge about the needs and experiences of their beginning teachers and possibly encourage a review of policies and practices in order to improve the induction and retention of new teachers. Further, the results could be of use to those planning the Beginning Teachers' Conferences organized by school boards across the country as they would indicate areas of concern that could be addressed in order to better prepare the participants for their first assignment. Finally, the information resulting from this study could directly benefit principals who have beginning teachers on staff. Administrators would have a better understanding of how to facilitate their adaptation and support their development in their new role. This could result in a more positive, successful experience for the teachers and principals, as well as for the school as a whole.

By responding to beginning teacher needs, new teachers would experience a greater degree of job satisfaction and would likely remain in the profession for a longer period of time. Consequently, the school boards in Edmonton may not experience as intense a teacher shortage in the future.

In order to meet the goals of this study, it was first necessary to develop an instrument that would measure beginning teacher needs and experiences in the first years of their profession. The instrument would then be used to gather information from new teachers about their perception of the assistance and support they received, the areas in which they needed more help and the level of job satisfaction they experienced in their first teaching assignments. This information would lead to a better understanding of the stresses and hardships of beginning teachers in Edmonton, more specifically, and would therefore enable the modification of induction processes at both the school and school-board level to retain their new teachers.

The Alberta Teachers' Association does conduct a yearly survey at their Beginning Teachers' Conference. However, the teachers being surveyed have only been teaching for one month at the point they complete the survey. Furthermore, the questions in the survey are almost entirely focused on background information and on areas of training. There is one question on the survey that asks the new teachers to rank order the most important issues and concerns raised in their first month of teaching. The results from the survey given at the 2000 Beginning Teachers' Conference in Edmonton indicated that classroom management and discipline, student assessment, diversity of special needs, planning and organizing and student motivation were the highest rated concerns (Alberta Teacher's Association, 2001). There has not yet been a follow-up survey conducted by the ATA assessing new teachers' needs and experiences.

Although beginning teachers' need for support is well documented (Charnock & Kiley, 1995; Marlot & Duane, 1997; Stroot et al., 1999; Weiss, 1999), there is a

lack of research regarding how new teachers experience the support they do receive (Olson, 1991). Information about beginning teacher needs, as well as the levels of support they receive could be valuable at various levels in the school system, as it may encourage a review of policies and practices in order to improve the induction and retention of new teachers. "Prior to implementing retention programs, districts should pinpoint the rate of and reasons for attrition, take a survey of job satisfaction across the district or from a sample of teachers and use the data gathered as a basis for determining changes that would improve retention" (Florida Department of Education, 1990, p 3-1).

In order to examine the perceived needs of beginning teachers and to explore the factors that lead to stress or to job satisfaction for new teachers in Canada, it would be useful for quantitative data to be gathered through the use of a survey. Current Canadian instruments designed to assess the needs and experiences of beginning teachers were only found in two unpublished theses (Carruthers, 1986; Hewitson, 1975), therefore a more up-to-date survey focusing on relevant teacher issues was needed, hence the purpose of this research.

Research questions and organization

The following were the broad research questions that drove this study:

1) What are factors that may be linked to beginning teacher attrition in the Edmonton area?

2) What are the needs and experiences of new teachers and how do these affect their level of job satisfaction?

3) Are beginning teachers receiving the assistance and support they need to experience success in their new profession?

This document is organized so as to first describe the method of the study, including the procedure used to gather data, the participants involved, the complete research instrument, and the ethical considerations. Immediately following, a section describing the process involved in the development of the questionnaire has been included to insure a thorough understanding of the research instrument. Chapters 2 and 3 include articles based on the findings of this study. The first article is to be submitted to an academic journal, whereas the second is intended for a widely read magazine for teachers. The second chapter is an article in which the study's findings regarding the most stressful job aspects for beginning teachers, as well as the areas in which they are in greatest need of support and assistance, are described. In the third chapter, the findings concerning the relationship between administrative support and new teacher job satisfaction are explored. Finally, in the concluding chapter of the study the research findings are summarized, the study's limitations are explored and the implications and future research stemming from the results of this project are addressed.

Method

Procedure

The original intent for this study was first to collect information through a survey, and then to gather qualitative data by holding two focus groups to further explore new teachers' experiences and needs. Participants involved in the survey

were invited to respond via email if they were interested in being part of a focus group to further discuss new teacher issues. However, since there were no new teachers who expressed an interest in taking part in a focus group, only the information gathered through the survey was used.

Prior to the distribution of the surveys, approval was given from both the Edmonton Public and Edmonton Catholic school boards to approach selected schools. Principals of 55 schools with beginning teachers were contacted by the researcher to inform them about the purpose of the survey and to ask for their consent to having surveys sent to their school. Each principal was then sent a package containing an information letter and a sample of the survey, as well as packages for each beginning teacher in the school. They were then asked to pass the packages to the beginning teachers in their school in order to give them the option to participate. Completed surveys were mailed back in the self-addressed, pre-stamped envelopes provided. There was a 42% response rate, 44 returned out of 104 delivered, which was seen as an acceptable response rate. However, due to restrictions placed on the researcher by the Edmonton Public School Board, only 15 of their schools could be approached resulting in a low number of total surveys distributed.

Participants

In total, there were 44 survey respondents from Edmonton Public and Edmonton Catholic School Boards. Of these, there was an even split between first- and second-year teachers. The sample consisted of 9 males and 35 females, with 50% under the age of 25, 25% between the ages of 25 and 29 and the other 25% aged 30 and over.

Further, a little over half (25) of the respondents were teaching at the elementary level and the other 19 participants taught at the junior high (11) or high school (8) level.

There are several possible reasons for which many beginning teachers did not respond to the survey and for which no teachers expressed interest in the focus group. First, the impersonal nature of the survey distribution, due to the restrictions placed on the researcher by the Cooperatives Activities Program (CAP) and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) regulations, is thought to have had a significant impact on the response rate. It is likely that more surveys would have been completed and that some teachers would have participated in the focus groups had had the researcher been able to approach the beginning teachers directly and explain the purpose of the study in person. In addition, as a result of having had principals distribute the surveys in their schools, it is possible that new teachers were more reluctant to participate for fear of appearing incompetent in the face of an authority whom teachers what to impress. Further, new teachers may not feel comfortable identifying their perceived needs, stresses and feelings of support, when the survey was presented to them by an authority figure who will write their evaluation. Finally, issues of workload and lack of time may have also played a factor in the response rate of the survey and the focus group participation.

Research instrument

The Beginning Teacher Survey used in this study was generated using questions adapted from two other studies (Carruthers, 1986; Hewitson, 1975) as well as new questions constructed to address the more current issues related to beginning teachers. In the first section of the survey the participants were asked to provide some

personal information, such as years of teaching experience, education, gender and age. In the second part of the survey the focus was on needed and received help in adjusting to the school. The next sections included questions on the assistance they needed and received adjusting to the classroom, to the field of education and to their new role. Sections on administrative support, supervisory practices and job satisfaction were also covered in the in the survey. The last part of the survey was comprised of written answer questions related to stress, support, induction programs, highlights and teacher preparation. (See Appendix A for a copy of the survey.)

Ethical Considerations

First, the study was approved by the University of Alberta Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (see Appendix C for approval notice). Following the ethics approval, a research project application for the Cooperative Activities Program (CAP) was submitted to the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta (see Appendix D for completed application). The Associate Dean of Research of the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta approved the application and subsequently forwarded the package to the Edmonton Public and Edmonton Catholic school boards. Upon approval from both school boards, individual schools were contacted.

Due to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) regulations, the school boards were unable to disclose the names and addresses of their new teachers to the researcher. Therefore, the school boards and school administrators were only asked the number of beginning teachers currently on staff in each school. The administrators were asked to distribute the packages and inform the

new teachers of their option to participate. The information letter contained in the package indicated that participation in the study was completely voluntary and that even after agreeing to participate they would still have the option to discontinue at any time until they mailed the survey.

On the cover of the survey it was explained that the participants could leave out any question(s) they did not want to answer and could end their participation at any time prior to returning the survey, at which point it would be impossible distinguish one survey from another. It was explained that there would be no names attached to the surveys and that it would not be possible, from the answers, to identify the school board from which they came. In addition, it was explained that no individual results would be reported, with the possible exception of a quote or comment, which would only be identified by general background information such as age or years of teaching experience. Finally, the letter indicated that the data collected in this study may be published in a journal or presented at a conference. If they chose to participate, informed consent was assumed by their completion of the questionnaire. Completed surveys were returned by mail to the researcher in a sealed envelope, and were then kept in a secure, locked area.

The risk of harm and threat was thought to be minimal, however, a sheet was distributed with the survey on which the names of two low-cost counselling organizations were indicated. Participants who wished for counselling or support as a result of issues raised in this study could choose to contact them.

Questionnaire development

The questionnaire was constructed by selecting questions from two pre-existing surveys, updating certain items by using more current terminology, and adding new items based on issues and concerns that emerged from the literature. The survey was comprised of 7 quantitative scales and a section of open-ended questions. In this article the focus is on the development of the quantitative items.

Adjustment to the school. This scale was constructed using most of the items from Carruthers' (1986) scale: Adjustment to the School. It measured the degree of assistance the new teachers needed adjusting to the school, compared to the degree of assistance they actually received in this area. The scale contained 10 items, 7 of which were directly taken from his scale and 2 of which were slightly reworded (i.e. replacing the word "aims" by the word "goals"). Although Carruthers does not provide any reliability evidence for his scales, he used the expert judgment of doctoral students in the field to help with its construction and also administered the survey to a sample of new teachers to also receive feedback about the appropriateness and the quality of the survey and to increase the validity of the questionnaire (Carruthers, 1986).

A new item was added regarding the degree of assistance the teachers needed in regards to planning and organizing the extra-curricular duties in which they were involved. The rationale behind this additional item was that the issue of extra-curricular activities is often referred to, in the current literature, as one of the factors contributing to beginning teacher stress (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2001; Charnock, 1995; Easley, 2000).

The response format was kept relatively similar to Carruthers' scale, although the directions were reworded. Participants were instructed to rate the degree of assistance they needed, as well as the degree of assistance they received on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *none* (0) to *very great* (4). A new *N/A (not applicable)* response alternative was in case certain items didn't apply to certain teachers. For example, in high school perhaps organizing parent volunteers isn't necessary or perhaps some teachers aren't required to take on extra-curricular activities.

Adjustment to the classroom. This scale was also constructed using most items from Carruthers' (1986) scale on classroom adjustment and the response format was the same as the above-mentioned scale. It is comprised of 20 items all together, 16 of which are taken from Carruthers' scale and 4 of which are new items. The new items were added as a result of personal experiences as a beginning teacher and discussions with relatively new teachers regarding aspects in which they recalled needing more assistance. The new items included issues around coordinating parent volunteers, preparing for parent conferences, dealing with special health needs and physical restrictions of students, and locating and ordering supplies.

Adjustment to the field of education. This scale was constructed using the same response format as the two previous scales and was also based on items from Carruthers' scale on adjustment to the field of education. There were 7 items included in the scale and only one of those was a new item addressing the teachers' perception that the principal recognized them as competent. The rationale behind the addition of this item was the emphasis in the literature on the importance of

administrative support on beginning teachers' feelings of success and job satisfaction (Marlow & Inman, 1997; Weiss, 1999).

Adjustment to the new role. Again, this scale was based primarily on items taken from Carruthers' scale. Out of 7 items, only one was newly created. This item related to the teachers' need to have assistance celebrating feelings of joy and/or success. The item was added to help balance out the other items which all focused on coping with negative emotions such as inadequacy, frustration, failure and rejection.

Supervisory practices. This scale was constructed using items from Hewitson's (1975) scale on supervisory practices. Only 5 items from his scale of 9 were used in the instrument and 2 of the items were slightly reworded to better fit the new scale's response format. The validity of Hewitson's questionnaire was improved by the changes made following feedback from his Pilot Study respondents and from suggestions made from the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Alberta (Hewitson, 1975). The reliability of the Supervisory Practices scale was calculated on the basis of 210 beginning teacher responses. Using the Kuder-Richardson formula 20, a measure of the internal consistency, the reliability coefficient was 0.79.

The participants were instructed to check off whom they regarded as their primary supervisor: principal, assistant principal, department head, or other. They were then asked to rate the different types supervisory practices they needed, as well as those they received from their primary supervisor. The response format was changed from *virtually never* (1) to *8 or more times* (5) and *prefer less* (1) *to prefer more* (3), to

none (0) to *very great* (5) and *N/A* in the new survey. This was done to keep the response format the same as for the previous scales in the questionnaire.

Administrative support. This scale was constructed largely based on selected items from Bentley and Rempel's Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire (1970), also used in Hewitson's (1975) instrument. The 5 items used in this scale were taken from 20 items dealing with teacher rapport with the principal. Bentley and Rempel (1970) indicate that the test-retest correlations based on data from 3023 teachers is 0.84.

Most of the items were slightly reworded for example "*the work of individual faculty members is appreciated and commended by our principal*" was changed to "*my work is appreciated and commended by my principal*", to focus the questions more on their own personal experience instead of having to comment on the whole staff's experience. The 3 new items that were added focused on whether or not the principal supported their classroom decisions, made explicit his/her evaluation of the effort the teacher was making, and conducted a fair year-end report or evaluation. These questions were added as a result of feedback from relatively new teachers regarding their experiences, as well as feedback from more experienced teachers regarding their perceptions of new teacher issues.

The response format was changed from a 4-point scale, ranging from *agree* (1) to *disagree* (4) in the Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire, to a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (5) and *don't know* (6). This change was made to differentiate between the levels of agreement and disagreement regarding the items to have a better understanding of the teachers' experiences.

Job satisfaction. The 10 items for this last scale were created with the goal of determining the level of overall satisfaction beginning teachers felt about their experience in their new profession. The items were constructed based on personal experience in the field, discussions with relatively new teachers and experienced teachers regarding different aspects of job satisfaction. The response format was kept the same as the Administrative Support scale, ranging from *strongly agree* (1) to *strongly disagree* (5) and *I don't know* (6).

Table 1
Description of Scales

Scale	Description
Adjustment to the school	Perceived assistance needed and received with getting to know the school's layout and organization, programming, student services and philosophy, as well as adjustment to the professional and support staff (Carruthers, 1986).
Adjustment to the classroom	Perceived assistance needed and received with developing a better understanding of curriculum, students, teaching methods, evaluation, organization, resources and equipment (Carruthers, 1986), planning and coordinating.
Adjustment to the field of education	Perceived assistance needed and received developing feelings of comfort, competency and confidence and developing professional involvement outside of the school.
Adjustment to the new role	Perceived assistance needed and received coping with demands, feelings and restraints associated with their new position.
Supervisory practices	Perceived amount of various supervision practices needed and received including evaluative, consultative and informal classroom visits and discussions conducted by the teacher's primary supervisor.
Administrative support	Feelings about the principal's professional competency, interest in teachers and their work, ability to communicate and skills in human relations (Hewitson, 1975).
Job satisfaction	Feelings of satisfaction with teaching, preparedness, appreciation, morale and confidence in the profession.

Results

One of the goals of this study, and the one that will be reported on in this article, was to produce a reliable questionnaire for measuring beginning teachers' needs and experiences in 7 different scales: adjustment to the school, adjustment to the classroom, adjustment to the field, adjustment to the role, supervisory practices, administrative support, and job satisfaction. Each scale was examined separately to detect and eliminate poor functioning items, either on the basis of reliability or response rate. Finally, based on the remaining items, scale means, standard deviations and internal consistency (alpha) coefficients for each of the 7 scales are given in Table 2.

First, the total sample size (n=44) was very limiting in terms of data analysis for this study. Therefore, it was important to include as many respondents as possible for each scale. Since the data was being analyzed per scale and not per item, items with low response rates needed to be eliminated to increase the total number of respondents for each scale. Consequently, items were removed from the scales in order to maximize the use of the data collected.

For this reason, the item concerning planning and organizing extra-curricular activities was deleted from the scales measuring adjustment to the school needed and received. More specifically, although the scales' reliabilities were slightly higher with the item included (r= .89 and .88), 5 respondents answered *not applicable (N/A)*, which was coded as missing. Therefore, this new item added to Carruthers' scale may be valid but was removed from the *Adjustment to the School* scales in this study.

The new items added to the *Adjustment to the Classroom* scales, concerning coordinating parent volunteers and knowing how to deal with health needs or physical restrictions of students, were also deleted due to the high frequencies of *not applicable* (N/A) responses. The internal consistency (alpha) coefficients were over .92 for the scales, with or without the items deleted.

For the *Administrative Support* scale, the item concerning the fairness of the principal's year-end evaluation was deleted due to 25 *don't know* responses. Likely participants in their first year teaching would not yet have received a year-end evaluation, so in order to be able to use the rest of their responses for the scale, the item was removed. The deletion of this item also increased the reliability of the scale from .82 to .91.

Finally, the *Job Satisfaction* scale was altered the most significantly. Although the original scale yielded an internal consistency (alpha) coefficient of .87, there was only an N of 32 due to missing responses. Since this scale was very important for the purpose of the study and for the data analysis, a high response rate was needed. Four of the 10 items were retained based on their more direct representation of job satisfaction and on their response rates. These items included: 1) wishing they hadn't chosen teaching as a profession, 2) feeling well-respected and appreciated, 3) high teaching morale at school, and 4) getting a lot of satisfaction out of teaching. This new scale, comprised of these 4 items, resulted in an N of 44 and a reliability of .86. Using 3 of the remaining items, a new scale measuring future plans could be created using: 1) plans to leave the teaching profession within 5 years, 2) current profession is a life-long choice, and 3), they would choose teaching if they could choose life's

work over again. This *Future Plans* scale had a reliability of .92 and an N of 32. A complete list of the items retained and deleted for each scale are included in Appendix E.

Table 2
Scale Means, Standard Deviations, Internal Consistencies

Scale	N	M	SD	α
Adjustment to school (assistance needed)	40	21.30	7.42	.88
Adjustment to school (assistance received)	37	21.43	7.13	.86
Adjustment to classroom (assistance needed)	32	45.59	13.44	.92
Adjustment to classroom (assistance received)	30	35.17	13.56	.92
Adjustment to the field (assistance needed)	37	15.30	5.88	.82
Adjustment to the field (assistance received)	33	15.79	6.88	.90
Adjustment to the new role (assistance needed)	38	16.87	7.63	.89
Adjustment to the new role (assistance received)	36	14.36	7.63	.92
Supervisory practices (assistance needed)	38	11.16	3.55	.86
Supervisory practices (assistance received)	37	10.41	5.26	.85
Administrative support	36	28.33	5.95	.91
Job satisfaction	44	14.38	3.64	.86

Limitations

The present study demonstrated that each of the 7 scales of the beginning teacher questionnaire had good reliability. In other words, respondents gave consistent answers to same scale items, thereby implying that the items may belong together.

However, before any conclusions could be drawn about the scales, further validity evidence would need to be obtained. Unfortunately, due to the small sample size, the most significant limitation of the study, it was not possible to factor analyze the data. Therefore, the study needs to be replicated in order to determine the validity of each item and each scale. Further validity evidence could also be determined, using experts in the field to evaluate the instrument.

It would have also been beneficial to conduct a pilot study whereby the researcher went through the survey question by question with a small sample of beginning teachers to determine their perceptions of each item and their thought processes behind each answer. This would have likely given very valuable information regarding the relevance and quality of each item. With this information, it is possible that certain items may have been altered, clarified, or deleted, while new items may have been added to the instrument.

It would also be important to give further consideration to the deleted items of the instrument used in this study. The items may prove to be valid items if a larger sample size was obtained or if a delineated sample was used. For example, if the survey were only given to new elementary teachers, likely there would be a higher response rate to questions concerning coordinating parent volunteers and perhaps planning and organizing extra-curricular activities. This would allow the analysis of more substantial data. Having a small pilot study and receiving feedback from beginning teachers would also help determine if the items were relevant and applicable to their teaching situation. Based on such information, the deleted items could then either be permanently discarded or reintegrated into the instrument.

If validity evidence were found, this questionnaire could be of great value in future research. By giving all beginning teachers the option to complete the survey after their first or second year of teaching, quality information could be gathered regarding how beginning teachers' needs were being met and how they could better be helped. This information would be useful at the university, school, and school board level. Knowing what beginning teachers need would enable all three levels to better prepare, support and supervise them in their new profession. Evidently, the retention of beginning teachers is becoming more crucial, as the need for teachers increases. Understanding and addressing their needs and experiences would likely increase their level of job satisfaction and consequently lengthen new teachers' stay in the profession.

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CHAPTER 2

Support and assistance needed by beginning teachers

As the level of beginning teacher attrition increases, so then does the need to better understand the needs of new teachers. The Canadian Teachers' Federation reported that 25 to 30% of beginning teachers leave the profession in the first five years (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2001). Further, the Federation indicated that due to the large numbers of teachers retiring and to the increasing levels of new teachers resigning, there will continue to be a significant teacher shortage in Canada until something is done (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2001). The teaching profession is becoming increasingly demanding and complex, making is necessary for new teachers to receive specialized assistance and support in their first years of teaching so that they will remain in the field (Cole, 1993).

As a result, looking more closely at the way in which new teachers are inducted into this profession and supported in their role is crucial. Cole (1993) indicated that often, beginning teachers are faced with a very difficult initiation into the profession.

> Unfortunately, new teachers are often confronted by the least desirable teaching assignments their new school can offer and, frequently, they are expected to assume teaching responsibilities for which they are not fully qualified. Ill-equipped classrooms in locations isolated from their colleagues, split grades, diverse teaching assignments which require multiple lesson preparation, and responsibility to teach many particularly challenging students are but a few of the realties with which new teachers are expected to cope (p.9).

Are beginning teachers feeling supported in their first assignments? Are they receiving the assistance they need in the areas in which they are experiencing the most difficulty? Are experienced teachers and administrators investing enough time

in helping beginning teachers further develop their skills and become more competent? "School-based induction programs can be thought of as a way to address new teachers' retention into the profession and may eventually reduce the large number of new teachers leaving the profession" (Hope, 1999, p. 56). Therefore, the unique needs of beginning teachers must be further studied to enable schools to provide them with the support they require to be successful.

Research shows that classroom discipline (Brock & Grady, 1998; Covert, Williams & Kennedy, 1991; Veenman, 1984), time spent in preparation and evaluation (Charnock & Kiley, 1995), dealing with special needs students and individual differences (Brock & Grady, 1998; Charnock & Kiley, 1995; Veenman, 1984), lack of spare time, heavy teaching loads (Ganser, 1999), and determining appropriate expectations for students (Brock & Grady, 1998) are among the highest ranking problems for beginning teachers. Other areas of difficulty include: dealing with stress, evaluating and assessing student work, feeling inadequate as a teacher (Brock & Grady, 1998) having inadequate supplies, relating with parents, and having inadequate support and large class sizes (Ganser, 1999). Beginning teachers often feel overwhelmed by all of their responsibilities and pressures (Cole, 1993) as well as isolated and unsupported in their new role (Fullan, 1993). Further, some report feeling inadequate as teachers (Veenman, 1984) and without support and guidance become disillusioned and leave the profession early on.

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceived degree of support beginning teachers in the Edmonton area need in the areas of adjustment to the school, adjustment to the classroom, adjustment to the field and adjustment to the

role, compared to the perceived level of assistance they receive in each of these areas. The goal was to identify the areas in which new teachers felt they needed increased assistance, the areas in which they were currently feeling well supported and the aspects of the job they found most stressful. Gathering this information was for the purpose of helping administrators and school boards gear their training and support towards the most pressing needs of their beginning teachers, to allow them to experience more success in their new profession.

Method

Respondents

The respondents were 44 beginning teachers from Edmonton Public and Edmonton Catholic schools, of whom 9 were male and 35 were female. The sample consisted of half first-year teachers and half second-year teachers, with 25 teaching at the elementary level and 19 at the junior high and high school level. Approximately half of the respondents were under the age of 25, 25% were between 25 and 29 and the other 25% were 30 and over.

Measures

Respondents completed a self-report questionnaire consisting of 7 subscales, only 4 of are relevant to this paper. These subscales, largely based on Carruther's (1986) scales, measured the degree of assistance beginning teachers needed, and the degree of assistance they received in the areas of: adjustment to the school, adjustment to the class, adjustment to the field and adjustment to the role. There are between 7 and 19 items per scale, with a 5-point Likert scale response format ranging from *none* (0) to *very great* (4), and *N/A* (not applicable). The reliabilities for all four scales, including

those measuring assistance needed and assistance received, ranged from .86 to .92. See table 1 for the specific reliabilities for each scale. The survey also included one open-ended question relevant to this study: What aspect of your job do you find the most stressful?

Procedure

First, the school boards gave their approval and assigned certain schools to be approached regarding participation in the study. This evidently limited the number of schools involved in the study, as well as the pool of new teachers from which to obtain the sample. However, all principals, except one, who were approached agreed to give the new teachers in their school the option to fill out the self-administered questionnaire. The one principal who declined indicated that both she and her beginning teacher were already participating in a study for new teachers and felt that it would be too much to take part in another. In total, fifty Edmonton schools were involved in the study.

The principals were then asked how many full-time first-and second-year teachers were currently on staff, and subsequently a package for the principal and each new teacher was hand-delivered to each school. A total of 104 beginning teacher surveys were distributed. The packages included a cover letter explaining the nature and purpose of this optional study, as well as information about the way in which the anonymity of the respondents would be insured. The surveys were distributed after the school reporting period was over and the teachers were given two weeks to complete the survey.

Study participants completed the survey on beginning teacher needs and experiences and returned the completed form, by mail, in an envelope provided. Forty-four out of 104 completed surveys were returned.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics for all four scales, assistance needed and received, are presented in Table 1. Included are means, standard deviations, observed ranges, possible ranges, and coefficient αs. As can be seen, for the majority of the scales, the observed ranges correspond quite closely to the possible ranges, indicating that there was high variability in the responses. All reliability estimates (coefficient α) are at or above .82 for each scale.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for all scales (n= 30-40)

Scale	Mean	SD	Observed range	Possible range	Coefficient α
Adjustment to school (assistance needed)	21.30	7.42	6 - 36	0 - 36	.88
Adjustment to school (assistance received)	21.43	7.13	4 - 34	0 - 36	.86
Adjustment to classroom (assistance needed)	45.59	13.44	13 - 68	0 - 72	.92
Adjustment to classroom (assistance received)	35.17	13.56	11 - 66	0 - 72	.92
Adjustment to the field (assistance needed)	15.30	5.88	2 - 28	0 - 28	.82
Adjustment to the field (assistance received)	15.79	6.88	2 - 28	0 - 28	.90
Adjustment to the new role (assistance needed)	16.87	7.63	4 - 32	0 - 32	.89
Adjustment to the new role (assistance received)	14.36	7.63	0 - 32	0 - 32	.92

Correlations

Intercorrelations among the Adjustment to the school, Adjustment to the classroom, Adjustment to the field and Adjustment to the role scales, both in degree of assistance needed and received, are presented in Table 2. All four scales measuring the degree of assistance needed adjusting to the school, the classroom, the field and the role were strongly and positively related, as were the scales measuring the degree of assistance received in each area. In other words, the scales seem to be measuring related, yet different constructs. Therefore, the scales merit being studied separately however, they could also be looked at as a whole under *the degree of assistance beginning teachers need and receive in the teaching profession.*

As expected, the majority of the correlations between the degree of assistance needed and the degree of assistance received in each of the four areas were negative. Thus indicating that as a whole, beginning teachers need more assistance than they are receiving. Most of these correlations however were quite modest with the exception of the association between the degree of assistance needed adjusting to the role and both the degree of assistance received adjusting to the classroom (-.68) and to the field (-.49). Otherwise stated, the more assistance new teachers needed adjusting to the role, the less assistance they believed they received adjusting to the classroom and to the field.

Table 2. Intercorrelations among all scales (n= 30-40)

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.Adjustment to school (needed)	-						
2.Adjustment to classroom (needed)	.73**	-					
3.Adjustment to field (needed)	.72**	.60**	-				
4.Adjustment to role (needed)	.57**	.67**	.65**	-			
5.Adjustment to school (received)	.03	-.34	-.41*	-.30	-		
6.Adjustment to classroom (received)	-.15	-.35	-.28	-.68**	.75**	-	
7.Adjustment to field (received)	-.04	-.23	-.08	-.49**	.65**	.85**	-
8.Adjustment to role (received)	-.07	-.39*	.05	-.15	.44**	.78**	.80**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Dependent t tests

Dependent t tests were conducted at the .05 level of significance for each of the four scales. This was to test whether there was a significant difference in means between the degree of assistance beginning teachers needed and the degree of assistance they received. For the scales measuring the degree of assistance needed and received adjusting to the school, the result of a two-tailed paired samples t test was, ($t_{(36)} = 0.185$; $p=0.854$). Although participants needed ($M = 21.73$) more

assistance than they received (M = 21.43), the results were not statistically or practically significant. The results were similar for the scales measuring the assistance needed and received adjusting to the field ($t_{(32)} = 0.133$; p=0.895). They needed slightly more assistance (M = 16.00) than they received (M = 15.79), but again the results were neither statistically or practically significant. The same could be said for the scales measuring the degree of assistance needed (M = 17.36) and received (M = 14.36) adjusting to the role, with the result of the t test being ($t_{(35)} = 0.157$; p=0.125). Finally, the difference in means between the degree of assistance needed (M = 45.13) and the degree of assistance received (M = 35.17) adjusting to the classroom was both statistically and practically significant ($t_{(29)} = 2.436$; p=0.021). In other words, although the trend for each of the four areas was that new teachers needed more assistance than they were receiving, the only area in which there seemed to be a real discrepancy was in their adjustment to the classroom.

Qualitative Results

In addition to the 4 scales related to adjustment, one open-ended question was used to gather more data regarding which aspect of the job beginning teachers found most stressful. The question was *Which aspect of the job do you find most stressful?* The following were the choices given: students, administration, staff, extra-curricular activities, workload, assessment/marking, parents and other (specify). They were also asked to explain their response. This question was meant to confirm and possibly further identify specific areas of difficulty new teachers encountered, so that administration, experienced staff and/or mentors would have a better idea of how to support beginning teachers throughout the school-based induction process.

Many of the respondents indicated that there was more than one aspect of the job that they found very stressful and therefore had a hard time selecting only one. Therefore, several responses included more than one component. Further, 93% of the respondents further explained their answers and consequently some different and/or more specific stressful aspects arose.

Clearly, the issue of excessive workload, selected by 43% (n= 19) of the respondents, was the aspect causing the new teachers the most stress. Dealing with students was identified as a primary source of stress for 25% (n= 11). Issues around special need students, discipline and classroom management were specified under this category as areas of specific concern and difficulty. The third aspect selected for being most stressful was that of assessment and marking, identified by 23% (n = 10) of the respondents. Dealing with parents was also an aspect of the job identified as being one of the most stressful in 18% (n = 8) of the surveys. More specifically, respondents identified difficulties with over-involvement, lack of respect, lack of support and unrealistic expectations as issues causing them stress in this area. The other aspects including administration, staff and extra-curricular activities were only selected as being the most stressful by between 5-7% of the respondents. See Table 3 for the percentage of the responses given for each aspect.

New aspects identified by the respondents as among the most stressful were: lack of time (20% n = 9), over-crowded classrooms (2% n= 1), lack of resources (7% n=3), and achievement exams (2% n= 1). The issue of lack of time is strongly associated with having an excessive workload, which again was the aspect chosen most frequently by the respondents, so this may or may not be a separate issue.

Table 3. Percentages of the responses identifying the *most stressful* job aspects for beginning teachers.

Most stressful job aspect	Percentage
Workload	43
Students (special needs, discipline, classroom management)	25
Assessment / marking	23
Lack of time	20
Parents (over-involvement, lack of respect and support, unrealistic expectations)	18
Administration (lack of support)	7
Extra-curricular activities	7
Lack of resources	7
Staff (difficulty building relationships)	5
Over-crowded classrooms	2
Achievement exams	2

Discussion

The results of this study are largely consistent with the recent, primarily American research suggesting that having heavy workloads, dealing with special need students, enforcing discipline and lacking time are the highest ranking problems for beginning teachers (Brock & Grady, 1998; Charnock & Kiley, 1995; Covert, Williams & Kennedy, 1991; Ganser, 1999; Veenman, 1984). However, the results of this study differed from existing research in that the respondents also selected assessment as one of the highest ranking, stressful aspects of their job. Although the issue of assessment and/or evaluation was raised in other research, it was not among the top areas of difficulty for those teachers.

It was interesting to compare the results of this study to the results of the Alberta Teachers' Association 2000 Beginning Teachers' survey. That survey was completed by 342 beginning teachers, from 45 school jurisdictions from all areas of Alberta.

The survey was given to them at the Edmonton Beginning Teachers' Conference at the end of September, after their first month of teaching. They were asked to choose their five highest issues of concern out of the 12 listed on the survey: classroom management and student discipline, student assessment, diversity of special needs, planning and organizing, student motivation, lack of resources, dealing with parents, special education programs, ability to use technology, availability of technology, too many assignments, too many extra-curricular demands.

As many of the issues of choice were the similar to the issues given in this study, it was possible to make some comparisons between the results. The issues of classroom management, student discipline and diversity of special needs were grouped together and ranked second in this study, and also ranked first and second in the ATA (2000) study. Evidently, this is an issue that is an immediate area of concern for new teachers, and continues to be throughout their first years in the profession. Similarly, the issue of assessment, ranking third in our study and second in the ATA (2000) study, seemed to be a steady area of difficulty throughout beginning teachers' first assignments.

The most significant difference between the ATA (2000) survey results and the results from this study was the issue of workload. In the present study, workload was ranked as being the most stressful aspect of the job. Although the issue of workload was not directly mentioned in the ATA (2000) survey, issues of too many assignments and too many extra curricular assignments were included, and were ranked as both of the respondents' lowest areas of concern. This vast difference could be interpreted in one of two ways. First, beginning teachers may have not have

viewed the issue of too many assignments the same way as they viewed the issue of workload. In other words, they didn't feel they had too many assignments they just felt the work within the assignments was too great. Secondly, perhaps the issue of workload becomes significantly more stressful as the year progresses with the addition of more extracurricular or committee work, reporting periods, the increased marking and assessment and so forth. The issue of dealing with parents was also ranked higher in the present study than it was on the ATA (2000) study, which could also add to new teachers' workload.

These results indicate that some of the beginning teachers' areas of concern or areas of stress change over time and others stay relatively stable over their first year. It would be useful to administer a survey at the beginning of the year and again later in the year to all new teachers attending the Edmonton Beginning Teachers' conference, to determine how their areas of difficulty may change. This would enable administrators and experienced teachers supporting new teachers to better assist them in their new assignment.

The results from the scales administered in this study also indicated that beginning teachers needed more support than they received in the area of adjustment to the classroom. In other words, the difference between the degree of assistance they needed and the degree of assistance they received was only statistically and practically significant in the area of classroom adjustment and not significant in the areas of adjustment to the school, to the role and to the field. More specifically then, on average the respondents felt they needed more assistance becoming acquainted with the contents of their classrooms, understanding how their particular program fits

in with the total school program, dealing with class organization problems and class discipline problems, evaluating student progress, preparing school reports (i.e. report cards, attendance), developing teaching methods to deal with a variety of student needs, organizing time to cope with planning, corrections, report writing and other clerical tasks, locating and ordering supplies and making the links between theory and practice. Further, the results indicated that new teachers needed to a have a procedure available that would further encourage them to discuss problems they were having caused by their inexperience, and that, on average, they needed to be given a teaching load which was more reflective of their training and lack of experience. Finally, the largest discrepancy between the degree of assistance needed and the degree of assistance received in the area of classroom adjustment was in being given the opportunities to see experienced teachers at work. In other words, these new teachers believed that they would benefit significantly from being presented with more occasions to observe and/or work with experienced teachers. It is also likely that by having beginning teachers spend more time with experienced teachers in the classroom, other areas of concern such as classroom management, discipline, teaching methods and assessment would also be more effectively addressed. Giving new teachers these in-class mentoring opportunities could prove to be a very important part of the school-based induction process.

It would appear as though, generally, beginning teachers are receiving the support they need adjusting to the school, including getting to know the school's organization, programming, services, philosophy and staff, adjusting to the field, including developing feelings of competency, comfort and competency and developing

professional involvement outside of the school, and finally adjusting to the role, including coping with the demands, feelings and restraints associated with their new position. However, due to the limitations of this study in terms of sample size, it would be necessary to replicate the study with more respondents in order to be able to generalize these findings to all beginning teachers in the and Edmonton and/or Alberta region.

Further, replicating this study with a larger sample size would enable the comparison of needs between certain groups of beginning teachers. For example, it would be interesting to discover whether or not the needs are different for new teachers at the elementary level compared to the needs of those teaching at the secondary level. Another comparison that would be made possible by a larger sample would be looking at the differences in support needed and support received between genders. Do new female teachers have different needs than male teachers? Do they receive different degrees of support in different areas?

Until further research is conducted, the implications of this study are that beginning teachers in the Edmonton area appear to be in need of more support especially in the areas of classroom management, student discipline, assessment and parent relations. To address these difficulties, the respondents indicated the importance of having a procedure available for them to be able to discuss their problems with administration or other staff members and being given opportunities to see experienced teachers at work. Another significant issue raised was that new teachers felt they had an excessive workload and lacked the time complete all of their responsibilities and still maintain a personal life. This is obviously an area of great

concern, as being overloaded and overworked leads to burnout, which could subsequently lead to leaving the profession. Beginning teacher attrition is, according to the literature (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2001), a problem in Canada. By better supporting our new teachers and giving them teaching loads that reflect their inexperience, we may be able to avoid this problem in our Edmonton schools.

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CHAPTER 3

Principals play a key role in new teacher happiness

It is no wonder that being thrown into the teaching profession with a heavy workload to manage, important responsibilities to undertake, extra-curricular activities to coordinate, large class sizes to handle, and often a lack of resources with which to work, frequently leads to feelings of inadequacy, incompetence and stress among new teachers (Cole, 1993). However, as the rate of beginning teacher attrition increases, so then does the need to determine how to keep the ones we have. Currently up to 30% are leaving the profession within the first five years (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2001). Looking at the elements that lead to higher degrees of job satisfaction among our new teachers is critical in increasing teacher retention. How can we make their jobs more manageable and more enjoyable so that they will remain in the profession as productive, effective teachers? In a recent study exploring the needs and experiences of beginning teachers, the relationship between job satisfaction and administrative support was examined. The purpose was to determine to what degree, if at all, a supportive administration leads to happier new teachers overall.

Who took part in the study?

One hundred and four beginning teacher surveys were distributed to 55 Edmonton Catholic and Edmonton Public Schools, from which a total of 44 first and second year teachers responded. Of those who participated, 9 were male and 35 were

female; 25 were teaching at the elementary level and 19 were teaching at the junior/senior high level; half were under the age of 25, half were 25 and older.

What did the study involve?

The new teachers completed a self-administered, optional survey, which they returned anonymously. The survey consisted of 7 scales related to teachers' adjustment to the profession, supervisory practices, administrative support and job satisfaction. Additional written response items were also included to gather more information about their individual perspectives regarding their experiences. For the purpose of this article, only the administrative support and job satisfaction scales are discussed, which both had acceptable reliabilities (over .80). The administrative support scale, largely adapted from Hewitson's scale (1975), measures feelings about the principal's competency, interest in teachers and their work, ability to communicate, and skills in human relations. The job satisfaction scale measures feelings of satisfaction with teaching, feelings of respect and appreciation as a teacher, morale and confidence in the profession. For both scales, the response format ranges from *strongly agree (1)* to *strongly disagree (5)*.

What were the important findings?

First, examining the administrative support and job satisfaction scales separately, it was interesting to note the large range of responses for each scale. This indicated a wide variety in the perceptions beginning teachers had regarding the degree of support they were receiving from their administration. Obviously some felt completely unassisted, whereas others felt completely supported. One teacher commented: " Despite multiple requests for help, guidance and support from my

administration, I have yet to be provided with any help… Highly upsetting is that the administration does not believe me and does not imply that they have confidence in my ability." Another stated: "I was fortunate enough to have an incredible group of teachers and principal to work with my first year. This made the adjustment easier." Despite the wide variety of responses, however, the majority of the new teachers participating in the study generally perceived their administration as supportive.

For the job satisfaction scale, there was also a large discrepancy between the different views new teachers held regarding the level of satisfaction they were experiencing in the teaching profession. Some evidently felt completely satisfied in their new role, while others appeared to feel little, if any, sense of satisfaction as teachers. One teacher's comment was: " I am very happy with the profession I have chosen. Although the workload is great and the stress is also high, it is a job that is meaningful and very interesting." While another expressed strong dissatisfaction: "I'm quitting after this year. No amount of money is worth the physical and mental stress that I have been through in just three months this year. I will happily find a job next year in a field where my effort is fully appreciated." Overall however, the average of the responses to the job satisfaction scale indicated that generally, these beginning teachers did experience a sense of job satisfaction within their first year in the field.

When considering the responses of both scales together, the results indicated that there was a significant relationship between the degree of administrative support received by beginning teachers and the level of job satisfaction they experienced ($r = .62$, $p < .01$). In other words, the more new teachers perceived to be supported by

their administrators, the more they felt an overall sense of satisfaction with the teaching profession.

These findings were further confirmed by responses added in the long answer portion of the survey. The following are comments made by the new teachers regarding the importance of administrative support:

"My acceptance with the principal and other staff has been extremely important."

"It is hard to deal with all of the work of teaching when there is no support from the principal."

"Having a good and supportive team of teachers and administration are key. I have been blessed with the opportunity to teach where I do."

"It all starts with a nurturing principal – I would have quit after 3 weeks if I hadn't received the great support and encouragement I did."

So what are the implications?

Evidently, the results of this study suggest that the more new teachers feel supported by their administration, the more satisfied they feel in their new profession. Further, the importance of administrative support is validated by the teachers' individual experiences briefly described in their written comments. These results highlight the critical need for administrators to spend time understanding the overwhelming feelings experienced by their new teachers and assisting them in their areas of need and frustration. Even further, if administrators help instill feelings of competence and success in their beginning teachers, they may begin to reduce the

seemingly inevitable "imposter syndrome" that comes with assuming this challenging new role.

According to Hope (1999), intervening to diminish teacher isolation, facilitating mentoring and collegial relationships, and maximizing their potential for success through their teaching assignment are interventions that will assist beginning teachers in adjusting to their new role. Further, offering development opportunities, being accessible and fully explaining the evaluation process will help orient and induct first-year teachers, with retention as the primary goal. By spending the needed time assisting and supporting new teachers initially, likely the rate of retention will increase, thereby reducing the frequency of the induction process in the end.

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CHAPTER 4

Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that may be linked to beginning teacher attrition in the Edmonton area. To gain a more in depth understanding of beginning teacher needs it was necessary to examine the hardships and stressors of new teachers to determine the areas in which they need increased assistance and support, and to determine the factors that result in a positive first year experience. Knowing the specific areas of stress and difficulty affecting their new teachers would then enable Edmonton schools and school boards to better serve the needs of their beginning teachers, thereby possibly increasing their retention.

The current study first involved the development of the Beginning Teacher Survey used to gather the data for this project. This survey consisted of 7 scales measuring the degree of assistance needed and received in 4 different areas, supervisory practices experienced, administrative support received, and level of job satisfaction experienced by new teachers. The final section of the survey also contained written answer questions regarding stresses, highlights, supports and teacher training. The survey was distributed to first-and second- year teachers from the Edmonton Public and Edmonton Catholic School Boards. Forty-four surveys out of 104 were returned and the data received from those respondents was analysed.

It is important to note that due to the limitations of the study, small sample size and lack of representative sample, the data should be viewed with caution. First, although each of the survey's scales had a reliability of above .8, it was not possible to obtain validity evidence for each due to the sample size. Therefore, since factor

analysis was not possible, it would be necessary to re-administer the survey to a larger sample to determine if in fact the items truly measure the desired construct of each scale. Further, it must be taken into consideration that the generalizability of the results is limited given the restriction of the sample to two urban school boards and to the limited number of respondents. Again, for future research, a larger, more representative sample would permit the results to be analysed in relation to a variety of demographic variables such as gender, age, school socio-economic level, school size and teaching level. This would enable the discovery of possible significant findings regarding differences in needs and experiences between different groups, not possible in this study.

Due to the limited sample size, the present study focused primarily on examining in which areas, as a whole, beginning teachers felt they needed more assistance and in which areas they already felt well supported. Further, the study focused on identifying which aspects of the job new teachers felt were most stressful and which caused them most difficulty. Finally, the relationship between the perceived level of administrative support and the level of job satisfaction among new teachers was examined to determine the extent to which administrative support was a factor in teacher happiness.

Summary of the research findings

The summary of the research findings has been organized into 4 sections: the findings from the development of the survey instrument and the answers to the three research questions.

Survey Development

When examining the correlations between the four adjustment scales: adjustment to the school, to the classroom, to the field and to the role, a definite pattern immerged. First, all of the scales measuring the degree of assistance needed in the four areas were strongly and positively correlated, as were the scales measuring the degree of assistance they received. This pattern indicated that the scales were in fact measuring related, yet separate areas of adjustment. Therefore, in future research using all four scales may still prove to be useful, as they all seem to fit within the *adjustment to the profession* umbrella, while providing information on the different aspects involved. In addition, all seven scales, including the Supervisory Practices, Administrative Support and Job Satisfaction scales, proved to have good reliabilities and could also prove to be useful in future research.

The hardships and stresses facing new teachers

One of the aims of this study was to examine the hardships and stresses faced by new teachers and to better understand their needs. The survey data gathered did if fact shed some light on these issues. The majority of the correlations between the scales measuring the degree of assistance needed and those measuring the degree of assistance received were negative, although many were not statistically significant. The trend however indicates that generally these new teachers needed more help than they were receiving. It would be interesting to see if having a larger sample size would yield a more significant negative correlation between the degree of assistance needed and the degree of assistance received.

When dependent t tests were conducted to test the difference in means between the degree of assistance beginning teachers needed and the degree they received in the four areas, only the difference in the area of classroom adjustment was statistically and practically significant. In other words, the new teachers surveyed were generally receiving enough assistance adjusting to the school, to the field and to their new role, however were lacking support and assistance adjusting to the classroom. More specifically, they felt they needed more help becoming acquainted with the contents of their classroom, understanding how their program fits with that of the school, dealing with class organization problems and class discipline problems, evaluating student progress, preparing school reports (i.e. report cards, attendance), developing effective teaching methods, organizing time to cope with planning, corrections, report writing and other clerical tasks, locating and ordering supplies and making links between theory and practice.

Further, the results of the long essay answer section of the survey also indicated that the most stressful aspects of the job were having a heavy workload, dealing with students (i.e. discipline, classroom management, special needs) and assessing and evaluating students. Other stressful aspects included: lack of time, relations with parents, lack of administrative support, extra-curricular activities, lack of resources, difficulty building relations with staff, over-crowded classrooms and achievement exams.

The results also indicated that these new teachers felt that it was very important to be given a teaching load that reflects their inexperience in order to help them be successful in their new role. Further, they indicated that it was necessary to have a

pre-established procedure that would enable them and encourage them to discuss any difficulties they were experiencing in regards to their assignment. In future research it may be useful to interview new teachers in regards to procedures that have been either effective or ineffective throughout their first teaching years, to the determine best practices for assisting and supporting new teachers in problem resolution. Such practices could include regular, scheduled meetings with the administration or the assignment of mentors to each new teacher.

Interestingly, the greatest unfulfilled need perceived by these beginning teachers was the need to be given opportunities to see experienced teachers at work. Perhaps then the assignment of mentors would not only be an effective way to help new teachers troubleshoot, but would also be a good way to provide them with chances to observe more experienced teachers working in their classrooms. Likely this type of concrete, regular assistance and support would also lead to increased feelings of confidence and competence among beginning teachers.

Factors resulting in a positive experience

The second aim of the study was to gain a better understanding of the factors that resulted in a positive first year experience. Although there was not an extensive amount of information gathered in regards to this issue, support seemed to be the most significant factor related to positive experiences. It was found that there was a statistically significant correlation between the degree of administrative support received and the degree of job satisfaction experienced by new teachers. The more support they received, the more content and satisfied they were in their new profession. Again, in future studies it would be useful to interview new teachers

regarding specific types or methods of support that proved to be the most effective and the most successful in their beginning years. This information would enable administrators to adopt support practices that would lead to greater new teacher job satisfaction and moreover, increased new teacher retention.

Informing teachers, principals and school boards

The final aim of the study was to disseminate the information found to teachers, principals and school boards to help further their knowledge about the needs and experiences of their beginning teachers. To this end, one article discussing the results of this study will be submitted to an academic journal, and another will be submitted to a widely read teacher magazine. In addition, a copy of the thesis will be given to each of the two participating school boards.

Implications of the current study

The results from this study imply that beginning teachers in Edmonton are in need of more assistance adjusting to the profession than they are receiving. Many reported feeling overwhelmed by all of their responsibilities, as well as tired, stressed and over-worked. Although the majority of the new teachers surveyed indicated that they did feel supported by their administration, they still felt the need for more help adjusting to, and learning about specific aspects of the job. It was evident that some of these beginning teachers were no longer planning to remain in the profession for long and indicated that they could now understand the reasons behind teacher burnout and teacher attrition.

It is unfortunate that many new teachers, after less than two years, loose their drive and energy for the teaching profession largely due to heavy workloads and lack

of support. There is no doubt that the quality of education hinges on the passion and commitment of its teachers and therefore steps need to be taken to preserve these qualities in our beginning teachers. Workloads reflective of their lack of experience, limited extra-curricular activities, regular support from mentors and administrators, assistance with specific areas of need adjusting to the classroom and opportunities to observe experienced teachers at work were all identified by beginning teachers as key factors in a successful induction process. In other words, the presence of these factors would enable new teachers to experience greater levels of success in their first assignments. As a result, they would likely feel increased levels of competency, confidence and satisfaction, which would in turn lead to higher levels of retention among beginning teachers.

Although administrative support was shown in this study as being significantly related to new teacher job satisfaction, administrators alone cannot rectify the difficult situations in which our new teachers find themselves. Changes in policy need to first be made at the school board level regarding teaching load, induction programs, and hiring procedures to set the foundation for a positive teaching experience. Information on the specific needs of our new teachers and strategies to help support them, then need to be passed down to administrators working with beginning teachers. It then becomes the responsibility of the administrators to set the tone for the school, model effective support and assistance procedures and finally facilitate, and create opportunities for, the sharing of knowledge, expertise and resources between new and experienced teachers. Significant change in beginning teacher attrition will only occur when all levels of the school system become committed to

working together to help foster success in our new teachers and show them that they are valued professionals.

Suggestions for future research

Areas of future research may continue to explore the needs of beginning teachers, as well as factors involved in increasing new teacher retention. Future studies should work toward refining or developing an instrument, which has consistent content validity and strong reliability that measures the needs and experiences of beginning teachers. The instrument constructed for this study has good reliabilities, however would need to be administered to a larger sample in order to be able to determine its validity. In addition, it might be useful to conduct a pilot study using this survey to receive feedback from beginning teachers regarding the current items and organization of the instrument. This feedback would also add to the validity of the survey. Important feedback from new teachers could also be obtained in regards to the length of the survey, to determine if shortening the instrument may result in a higher response rate.

Again, a larger sample size would certainly be recommended, involving a representative sample of the different teaching levels, school socio-economic levels, and school sizes of new teachers from urban and rural Alberta areas. This would not only increase the generalizability of the results, but would also permit the comparison of needs between different groups. For example, it would be interesting to determine if new teachers in rural areas have different needs than those teaching in urban areas. Further, it would be interesting to examine the gender differences in regards to beginning teacher needs and preferences for methods of support.

Finally, more research is needed on the changing needs of new teachers. How are the needs of beginning teachers in their first month different from their needs after the first 6 months or at the beginning of their second year? It would be interesting to administer the same survey to first- and second- year teachers at different points in the induction process to determine the nature and degree of their needs at each stage. This would certainly lead to useful information for administrators, experienced teachers/mentors and school boards working with new teachers. It may even lead to the development of beginning teacher conferences that would be offered in addition to the ones offered in September of their first year, to address their changing needs and concerns.

Concluding comments

This study has served to reinforce the importance of further exploring the needs and concerns of beginning teachers in Alberta, to better understand their high rates of attrition. It is only by developing a better understanding of their needs that schools and school boards will be able to address them effectively and create more positive experiences for new teachers. Retention of those new to the profession must become a priority to maintain high quality education in the face of such a large teacher shortage.

APPENDIX A

Beginning Teacher Survey

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Department of Educational Psychology

Beginning Teacher Survey

To all participants:

As a first or second year teacher from an urban or rural school in the Edmonton area, you are being asked to complete this survey. The purpose of the study is to determine the needs and experiences of beginning teachers in order to better understand their rising rates of attrition. Having a more in-depth understanding of the needs of new teachers may lead to policy changes at the school and school board level, which could in turn increase teacher resiliency.

The results of this research may be used in journal publications or in presentations and written articles for other educators.

The information you give is **completely confidential**. Please do not put your name on the questionnaire. There are no right or wrong answers, but please be open and honest with your responses to the questions on the survey. Your opinion is very important to us.

If for any reason you don't wish to answer a question, simply leave it out. You may discontinue the survey at any time without consequence until you mail it in. After it has been mailed, it will be impossible to tell which survey is yours and therefore, it will be impossible to withdraw.

When you are finished, please mail the questionnaire in the self-addressed, pre-stamped envelope provided.

I would really appreciate you completing this by December 12, it should only take you about 30-45 minutes.

Thank you for your help. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Andrea Magill
M.Ed Student in Counselling
465-3582 (magill@ualberta.ca)

Gretchen C. Hess, Ph.D.
Professor, Dept. of Ed. Psych.
492-1155 (gretchen.hess@ualberta.ca)

Section A: Personal Data

Please check the appropriate box for each of the following items:

1. Years of teaching experience.

- ☐$_1$ Less than 1 year
- ☐$_2$ Less than 2 years

2. Main teaching level.

- ☐$_1$ Primary (K-3)
- ☐$_2$ Elementary (4-6)
- ☐$_3$ Junior High/Middle school (7-9)
- ☐$_4$ High School (10-12)

3. Size of teaching staff

- ☐$_1$ under 10
- ☐$_2$ 10-20
- ☐$_3$ 21-40
- ☐$_4$ 41-60
- ☐$_5$ 61-80
- ☐$_6$ 81-100
- ☐$_7$ 100 +

4. School District

- ☐$_1$ Inner city
- ☐$_2$ Rural
- ☐$_3$ Suburban

5. Average socio-economic status of parents in the community

- ☐$_1$ low
- ☐$_2$ medium
- ☐$_3$ high

6. Where were you trained for teaching?

- ☐$_1$ University of Alberta
- ☐$_2$ University of Lethbridge
- ☐$_3$University of Calgary
- ☐$_4$ Other Canadian University
- ☐$_5$ Non-Canadian University
- ☐$_6$ Other

7. What is your sex (gender)? ☐$_1$ male ☐$_2$ female

8. Age

- ☐$_1$ 20-24
- ☐$_2$ 25-29
- ☐$_3$ 30-34
- ☐$_4$ 35-40
- ☐$_5$ 40-44
- ☐$_6$ 45-49
- ☐$_7$ 50 and older

Section B – Adjustment to the School

As a beginning teacher, to what degree did you need assistance adjusting to your school in each of the following aspects?

To what degree did you actually receive assistance with each of these aspects in your initial teaching year?

Please circle the response that best fits your needs and your experiences.

	Degree of Assistance Needed	Degree of Assistance Received
	None Little Moderate Great Very Great N/A	None Little Moderate Great Very Great N/A
1. Becoming acquainted with the layout of the school	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
2. Meeting the principal's expectations of beginning teaching staff	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
3. Understanding the philosophy of the school	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
4. Learning school routines (reports submitted, records kept, i.e. long range plans, attendance)	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
5. Forming a link with an experienced teacher	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
6. Becoming acquainted with the rest of the staff	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
7. Making friends with members of staff	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
8. Achieving the goals of the school for my teaching subjects (i.e. curriculum, achievement exams)	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
9. Planning and organizing the extra-curricular duties in which I am involved	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐

10. Seeking demographic information about the students who attend the school (racial and religious components, family incomes and occupations, disadvantaged children etc.)	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
11. Other perceived needs relating to my adjustment to the school (please specify) _____ _____	0 1 2 3 4 ☐ 0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐ 0 1 2 3 4 ☐

Section C – Adjustment to the Classroom

As a beginning teacher, to what degree did you need assistance adjusting to your classroom in each of the following aspects?

To what degree did you actually receive assistance with each of these aspects in your initial teaching year?

Please circle the response that best fits your needs and your experiences.

	Degree of Assistance Needed	Degree of Assistance Received
	None Little Moderate Great Very Great N/A	None Little Moderate Great Very Great N/A
1. Becoming acquainted with the contents of the classroom	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
2. Dealing with lack of equipment	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
3. Implementing the school philosophy in the classroom	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐

4. Knowing how my own particular program fits in with the total school program	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
5. Dealing with class organization problems within permitted school limits	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
6. Dealing with class discipline problems within permitted school limits	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
7. Evaluating student progress	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
8. Preparing school reports (report cards, attendance, etc.)	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
9. Becoming acquainted with the students I teach and their backgrounds	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
10. Being given opportunities to see experienced teachers at work	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
11. Having a procedure available which encourages me to discuss problems caused by my inexperience	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
12. Being given a teaching load which reflects my training and lack of experience	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
13. Being given opportunities to grow professionally through the provision of in-service programs	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
14. Having a variety of teaching methods to deal with the different needs of the students	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
15. Organizing time to cope with matters such as planning, corrections, report writing and other clerical tasks	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
16. Co-ordinating parent volunteers	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
17. Preparing for parent conferences/meetings and "meet-the-teacher" nights	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
18. Knowing how to deal with health needs or physical restrictions of students	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
19. Locating or ordering supplies	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
20. Lack of congruence between theory and practice	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐

21. Other perceived needs relating to my adjustment to the classroom (please specify)		
_____	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
_____	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐

Section D – Adjustment to the Field of Education

As a beginning teacher, to what degree did you need assistance adjusting to the field of education in each of the following aspects?

To what degree did you actually receive assistance with each of these aspects in your initial teaching year?

Please circle the response that best fits your needs and your experiences.

	Degree of Assistance Needed	Degree of Assistance Received
	None Little Moderate Great Very Great N/A	None Little Moderate Great Very Great N/A
1. Having confidence in my role as a teacher	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
2. Feeling comfortable interacting with all school staff	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
3. Feeling that the parents recognize me as a competent teacher	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
4. Feeling that the principal/superintendent recognizes me as a competent teacher	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐

5. Becoming an active member of the teachers' professional organization	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
6. Becoming knowledgeable about the services offered by the Alberta Teachers' Association	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
7. Having access to professional reading/resources	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
8. Other perceived needs relating to my adjustment to the field of education (please specify) _____ _____	0 1 2 3 4 ☐ 0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐ 0 1 2 3 4 ☐

Section E – Adjustment to the New Role

As a beginning teacher, to what degree did you need assistance adjusting to your new role in each of the following aspects?

To what degree did you actually receive assistance with each of these aspects in your initial teaching year?

Please circle the response that best fits your needs and your experiences.

	Degree of Assistance Needed	Degree of Assistance Received
	None Little Moderate Great Very Great N/A	None Little Moderate Great Very Great N/A
1. Accepting the restraints placed on teachers by society	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
2. Coping with the demands of administrators	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐

3. Coping with feelings of frustration	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
4. Coping with feelings of inadequacy	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
5. Coping with feelings of failure	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
6. Coping with feelings of rejection	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
7. Celebrating feelings of joy/success	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
8. Coping with apprehension related to the adequacy of my professional preparation for teaching	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
9. Other perceived needs relating to my adjustment to the new role (please specify) _____ _____	0 1 2 3 4 ☐ 0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐ 0 1 2 3 4 ☐

Section F – Supervisory Practices

Whom do you regard as your primary supervisor?

Please check the most fitting response:

Principal ☐ **1**
Assistant Principal ☐ **2**
Department Head ☐ **3**
Other ☐ **4**
(please specify) _____

In the following questions, your "P.S." is the person you indicated in the above item as being your primary supervisor.

To what degree did you feel a need for each of the following supervisory practices from your **P.S.**?

To what degree did you actually receive the following supervision from your **P.S.** in your initial teaching year?

Please circle the response that best fits your needs and your experiences.

	Supervision Needed	Supervision Received
	None Little Moderate Great Very Great N/A	None Little Moderate Great Very Great N/A
1. **P.S.**-initiated evaluative visits to my classroom	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
2. Consultative or advisory visits to my classroom by my **P.S.**	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
3. Regular "drop-ins" by my **P.S.** during my class to help me develop my professional competence	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
4. One-on-one discussions with my **P.S.** to address my goals, concerns, difficulties etc.	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
5. Informal discussions or "chance meetings" with my **P.S.** resulting in professional or social discussions	0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐
6. Other perceived needs relating supervisory practices by my **P.S.** (please specify) _____ _____	0 1 2 3 4 ☐ 0 1 2 3 4 ☐	0 1 2 3 4 ☐ 0 1 2 3 4 ☐

Section G – Administrative Support

To what degree do you agree with the following statements concerning administrative support in your first year teaching?

*Answer these questions about your **principal** (even if your principal was your **P.S.** in the previous section).
Please circle the response that best fits your level of agreement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
1. The principal supports my classroom decisions	1	2	3	4	5	☐
2. The principal makes explicit to me his/her evaluation of the effort I am making	1	2	3	4	5	☐
3. My principal has a reasonable understanding of the problems connected with my teaching assignment	1	2	3	4	5	☐
4. I communicate openly and without hesitation with my principal	1	2	3	4	5	☐
5. My principal shows an interest in me and in my problems	1	2	3	4	5	☐
6. My work is appreciated and commended by my principal	1	2	3	4	5	☐
7. My principal promotes a sense of belonging among the teachers in our school	1	2	3	4	5	☐
8. My principal's year-end evaluation/report was fair	1	2	3	4	5	☐
9. Other perceived needs relating supportive administrative practices (please specify) _____	1	2	3	4	5	☐
_____	1	2	3	4	5	☐

Section H – Job Satisfaction

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Please circle the response that best fits your level of agreement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
1. Overall I feel that the teacher training I went through did a good job of preparing me for the classroom	1	2	3	4	5	☐
2. Teaching was my first choice as a career	1	2	3	4	5	☐
3. I wish I hadn't chosen teaching	1	2	3	4	5	☐
4. As a teacher I feel that I am well respected and appreciated	1	2	3	4	5	☐
5. The morale of teachers at my school is high	1	2	3	4	5	☐
6. I plan to leave the teaching profession within 5 years	1	2	3	4	5	☐
7. My current profession is a life-long choice	1	2	3	4	5	☐
8. I only chose teaching because I had no other options	1	2	3	4	5	☐
9. If I were just starting out and could choose my life's work all over again, I would choose teaching	1	2	3	4	5	☐
10. I get a lot of satisfaction out of teaching	1	2	3	4	5	☐

Section I – Reflection on Teaching Experience

1. What aspect of your job do you find the most stressful?

- ☐1 students
- ☐2 administration
- ☐3 staff
- ☐4 extra-curricular activities
- ☐5 workload
- ☐6 assessment/marking
- ☐7 parents
- ☐8 other (specify). _____

Please explain your response.

2. Where do you go for support or help when you experience job-related stress? (You may check more than one.)

- ☐1 Immediate family
- ☐2 Church
- ☐3 Administrators
- ☐4 Activities (sports, reading, clubs etc.)
- ☐5 Friends
- ☐6 Colleagues at work
- ☐7 Other (specify): _____

- ☐8 No support or help available
- ☐9 No help needed or desired

Please explain your response.

3. a) Did you have a Beginning Teacher Conference/ Induction Program sponsored by your school board?

☐1 No
☐2 Yes. I attended.
☐3 Yes. I didn't attend.
☐4 I don't know.

b) If you attended the conference and/or induction program was it effective?

☐1 Yes
☐2 No
☐3 Somewhat

Explain.

c) How many sessions/get-togethers did you have through this program?

☐1 One
☐2 Two
☐3 more than two (please specify ____).
☐4 I don't know.

4. a) Did you have a Beginning Teacher Conference/ Induction Program sponsored by a larger organization (i.e. Alberta Teachers' Association etc.)?

☐1 No
☐2 Yes. I attended.
☐3 Yes. I didn't attend.
☐4 I don't know.

b) If you attended the conference and/or induction program was it effective?

☐1 Yes
☐2 No
☐3 Somewhat

Explain.

5. What has been the highlight of your experiences in teaching so far?

6. If you were asked to give advice to the university on teacher preparation, what would you say?

7. Is there anything else you would like to share about your needs or experiences as a beginning teacher?

Thank you!

If you would be interested in participating in a focus group of 8-10 people to further discuss the issues raised in this questionnaire, please email me at magill@ualberta.ca

APPENDIX B

Information Letters for Administrators and Beginning Teachers

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
Department of Educational Psychology

Beginning Teacher Study

Dear Beginning Teacher,

If you are receiving this letter you are either in your first or second year of teaching and have probably already experienced many of the rewards and difficulties of this profession. After having taught for three years and having spoken with many new teachers, I have become very interested in your experiences. It seems that many teachers are leaving the profession much sooner than they had first anticipated, or feel that teaching isn't what they expected it to be. On the other hand some feel satisfied with their experiences as teachers and plan on continuing in this same profession for a significant amount of time.

The retention of beginning teachers is becoming more important, as there is an increasingly large number of teachers retiring and there is an increasing level of attrition occurring among new teachers. As the need for teachers becomes more significant, so then does the need to study the rationale behind the shortage. What makes some stay and some leave? It is important to examine the experiences, needs and stresses of beginning teachers in order to begin to generate and implement ways to better prepare and support those new to the profession.

For my Master's thesis in Educational Psychology Counselling, my supervisor, Gretchen Hess, and I are studying the factors that are leading to beginning teacher attrition in Alberta. Because of the difficulties involved in finding those individuals who have already left the profession, we have decided to survey first and second year teachers who are currently employed.

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the hardships and stresses facing new teachers that result in their leaving the profession. Our second goal is to develop a better understanding of the factors that have resulted in a positive first year experience.

Finally, our objective is to present the data collected in the survey to participating school boards in order to help further their knowledge about the needs and experiences of their beginning teachers. This information could be valuable at the school and school board level, as it may encourage a review of policies and practices in order to improve the induction and retention of new teachers. The results from this research may also be used in journal publications or in articles for other educators to promote a greater awareness of new teacher issues.

Having been a beginning teacher myself, I empathize with the heavy workload and multiplying "to do" piles on your desk and understand that your time is very precious and limited. At the same time, your participation in this survey would provide us with invaluable information that may benefit future beginning teachers.

Your participation is completely voluntary and all of your answers will be kept completely confidential. Further, it will be impossible to determine, from your answers, your school or school board. You may discontinue your participation at any time without consequence, until you mail in your questionnaire.

Please fill in the enclosed questionnaire and mail it back prior to **December 12, 2001**. The results of the study will be sent to your principal.

Thanks so much!

Andrea Magill
M.Ed. Student in Counselling
465-3582 (magill@ualberta.ca)

Gretchen C. Hess, Ph.D.
Professor, Dept. of Ed. Psych
492-1155 (gretchen.hess@ualberta.ca)

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
Department of Educational Psychology

Beginning Teacher Study

Dear Principal,

I would like your help in giving this survey to beginning teachers at your school. We are researching attitudes of new teachers and would like you to distribute these packages to first and second year teachers in your school. Each of these teachers would then have the option of participating or not.

Let me explain our research in more detail. For my Master's thesis in Educational Psychology Counselling, my supervisor, Gretchen Hess, and I are studying the factors that are leading to beginning teacher attrition in Alberta. After having taught for three years and having spoken with many new teachers, I have become very interested in their experiences. It seems that many teachers are experiencing much difficulty in their first assignments and consequently, are leaving the profession much sooner than they had first anticipated. On the other hand, some feel satisfied with their experiences as teachers and plan on continuing in this same profession for a significant amount of time.

The retention of beginning teachers is becoming more important, as there is an increasingly large number of teachers retiring and there is an increasing level of attrition occurring among new teachers. As the need for teachers becomes more significant, so then does the need to study the rationale behind the shortage. What makes some stay and some leave? It is important to examine the experiences, needs and stresses of beginning teachers in order to begin to generate and implement ways to better prepare and support those new to the profession.

Because of the difficulties involved in finding those individuals who have already left the profession, we have decided to survey first and second year teachers who are currently employed. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the hardships and stresses facing new teachers that result in their leaving the profession. Our second goal is to develop a better understanding of the factors that have resulted in a positive first year experience. Finally, our objective is to present the data collected in the survey to participating school boards in order to help further their knowledge about the needs and experiences of their beginning teachers. This information could be valuable at the school and school board level, as it may encourage a review of policies and practices in order to improve the induction and retention of new teachers.

The results from this research may also be used in journal publications or in articles for other educators to promote a greater awareness of new teacher issues.

Beginning teacher participation is evidently crucial to the success of this research. We hope you will share our enthusiasm for this project and that you will encourage the participation of your first and second year teachers. Their participation is completely voluntary and all of their answers will be kept completely confidential. It will be impossible to determine, from the answers, their school or school board. Further, they may discontinue at any time without consequence until they mail in their surveys.

The principals from each participating school will receive the results in the spring.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Andrea Magill
M.Ed. Student in Counselling
465-3582 (magill@ualberta.ca)

Gretchen C. Hess, Ph.D.
Professor, Dept. of Ed. Psych
492-1155 (gretchen.hess@ualberta.ca)

APPENDIX C

Ethical Approval From

the

Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board

FACULTIES OF EDUCATION AND EXTENSION
RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

Graduate Student Application for Ethics Review

Name: Andrea Magill **Student ID:** 337 217

E-mail: magill@ualberta.ca

Project Title: Studying the needs and experiences of beginning teachers

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Project Deadlines:

Starting date **September 1, 2001** Ending date **May 30, 2002**
If your project goes beyond the ending date, you must contact the REB in writing for an extension.

Status:

☐ Master's Project ☑ Master's Thesis ☐ Doctoral Thesis ☐ Other: (Specify)

The applicant agrees to notify the Research Ethics Board in writing of any changes in research design after the application has been approved.

A. Magill
Signature of Applicant Date August 20, 2001

The supervisor of the study or course instructor approves submission of this application to the Research Ethics Board.

Gretchen C. Hess
Signature of Supervisor/Instructor Date 20 August 2001

ETHICS REVIEW STATUS

☑ Review approved by Unit Statutory member/Alternate

☐ Review approved by Research Ethics Board

☐ Application not approved

Signature of REB Member Date Aug 21, 2001

APPENDIX D

Cooperative Activities Program
Research Project Application

COOPERATIVE ATIVITIES PROGRAM
Research Proposal

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED STUDY

Project title: Studying the Needs and Experiences of Beginning Teachers

Purpose/objectives of the study

The purpose of this project is to study the factors that are leading to attrition among beginning teachers in Alberta. First, the aim is to learn more about the hardships and stresses facing new teachers that result in their leaving the profession. Our second goal is to develop a better understanding of the factors that have resulted in a positive first year experience. Finally, our objective is to present the data collected in the survey to participating school boards in order to help further their knowledge about the needs and experiences of their beginning teachers. This information could be valuable at the school and school board level, as it may encourage a review of policies and practices in order to improve the induction and retention of new teachers.

Basis for project in the literature

The retention of beginning teachers is becoming more important, as there is an increasingly large number of teachers retiring and there is an increasing level of teacher attrition occurring among new teachers. According to a survey conducted by the Canadian Teachers' Federation, come September, 2001 there will be a shortage of 20,000 teachers across Canada (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2001). As the need for teacher retention becomes more significant, so then does the need to study the rationale behind the shortage. What makes some stay and some leave? It is important to examine the experiences of new teachers in order to determine their needs.

The literature in this area contains numerous articles about studies conducted in the United States exploring the reasons behind beginning teacher stress, burnout and attrition. Many emphasize the significance of administrative support on beginning teacher resiliency (Karge, 1993; Marlow & Inman, 1997), their decision-making ability (Weiss, 1999), the school environment and climate (Hewitt, 1993; Karge, 1993; Weiss, 1999), the low pay (Hewitt, 1993; Marlow & Inman, 1997), their extreme workload (Ganser, 1999; Hewitt, 1993) and their sense of frustration and isolation (Easley, 2000). However, after searching the literature as well as the information held by different Teacher Associations and colleges in Canada, it has not been possible to locate any recent Canadian studies that have statistics on the stresses, experiences and needs of beginning teachers in this country. The factors may or may not be the same for teachers here.

The Alberta Teachers' Association conducts a yearly survey at their Beginning Teachers' Conference, however, the teachers being surveyed have only been teaching

a month. Further, the questions in the survey are focused on background information and on areas of training. There has not yet been a follow-up needs survey conducted by the ATA. There are Canadian articles that reveal the levels of attrition and shortages of beginning teachers, but they do not provide information about the rationale behind the numbers. It is interesting that the 2000 National Issues in Education Poll, conducted for the Canadian Teachers' Federation, indicates that over 80% of Canadians believe that large classes, heavy work loads and lack of resources are contributing to beginning teacher attrition. Further, two thirds of Canadians believe beginning teachers are leaving due to being underpaid relative to other professionals (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2000). However, it would be important to survey beginning teachers themselves in order to examine the validity of these beliefs.

This study will enable us to inform the participating school boards about the needs and experiences of their beginning teachers. This information could be valuable at various levels in the school system, as it may encourage a review of policies and practices in order to improve the induction and retention of new teachers. "Prior to implementing retention programs, districts should pinpoint the rate of and reasons for attrition, take a survey of job satisfaction across the district or from a sample of teachers and use the data gathered as a basis for determining changes that would improve retention" (Florida Department of Education, 1990, p 3-1).

Research question(s)

1) What are factors leading to beginning teacher attrition in the Edmonton area?

2) What are the needs and experiences of new teachers and how do these affect their level of job satisfaction?

Procedure/methodology

This project with beginning teachers in their first or second year of teaching uses two methods. First, information will be collected through a survey. Later, two focus groups will be conducted to further explore new teachers' experiences and needs.

Principals of schools with beginning teachers will be phoned by the researcher to inform them about the purpose of the survey and to ask for their consent to having surveys sent to their school. In a follow-up letter, they are asked to pass an information letter along with the survey to the beginning teachers in their school in order to give them the option to participate. Once completed, the teachers would then mail in the surveys in the self-addressed, pre-stamped envelope provided.

At the end of the questionnaire, participants are asked to volunteer for a focus group via email if they are interested. The focus groups (8-10 members) will be used to elaborate on the issues raised in the surveys in order to get a more complete picture of a group of beginning teachers' experiences. To the extent possible, from those

indicating their willingness to participate, the diversity of needs and experiences expressed in the surveys will be represented.

Upon the completion of the data collection, descriptive statistics will be used to describe the sample, to summarize the findings and to examine the relationship between their needs and experiences and their degree of job satisfaction. If warranted, the relationship between certain variables will be analyzed using univariate and/or multivariate statistics. The qualitative information gathered from the two focus groups will be analyzed to show common themes of the experiences of the participating beginning teachers.

Research instruments

The Teacher's Survey being used in this study has been generated by taking questions from several other studies (Carruthers, 1986; Jaques, 1985; Hewitson, 1975), as well as by adding new questions adapted to the Edmonton area. In the first section of the survey the participants are asked to provide some personal information, such as years of teaching experience, education, gender and age. In the second part of the survey the focus is on needed and received help in adjusting to the school. The next sections include questions on the needed and received help in adjusting to the classroom and to the field of education. Questions on administrative support and job satisfaction are covered in the final sections of the survey (copy attached).

References

Canadian Teachers' Federation (2000). 2000 National Issues in Education Poll. Economic Services Bulletin, 6, November issue.

Canadian Teachers' Federation (2001). Help wanted: teachers. Worklife Report, 13 (2), 3-9.

Carruthers (1986). Mentors and the induction of beginning teachers. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Easley, J. (2000). Teacher attrition and staff development for retention (Report No. SP 039 486). California. (Eric Document Reproduction service No. ED 446 054)

Florida Department of Education (1990). Recruiting, Retaining, and Developing Exceptional Teachers: Strategies for Florida School Districts, 3/1-8.

Ganser, T. (1999). Reconsidering the relevance of Veeman's (1984) meta-analysis of the perceived problems of beginning teachers. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Hewitson, M.T. (1975). Professional satisfaction of beginning teachers. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Hewitt, P.B. (1993, November). Effects of non-instructional variables on attrition rate of beginning teachers: A literature review. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Jaques, N. (1985). Teacher stress: Sources, Effects and Coping. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Karge, B.D. (1993). Beginning teachers: In danger of attrition. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA.

Marlow, L. and Inman, D. (1997). Beginning teachers: Are they still leaving the profession? Clearing House, 70, 211-215.

Weiss, E.M. (1999). Perceived workplace conditions and first-year teachers' moral, career choice commitment, and planned retention: a secondary analysis. Teaching and Teacher Education, 15, 861-879.

DESCRIPTION OF HOW THIS ACTIVITY IS OF VALUE TO THE SCHOOL(S) OR SCHOOL DISTRICT(S) INVOLVED

This research project would be of direct benefit to both Edmonton Public and Edmonton Catholic School Boards as the results would provide them with information regarding their beginning teachers' needs and experiences in their first year in the profession. This information could then lead to a review of policies and practices concerning the induction and retention of their new teachers. By responding to beginning teacher needs, they would experience a greater degree of job satisfaction and would likely remain in the profession for a longer period of time. Consequently, the Edmonton School Boards may not experience as intense a teacher shortage in the future.

Further, the results could be of use to those planning the Beginning Teachers' Conferences as they would indicate areas of concern that could be addressed in order to better prepare the participants for their first assignment.

Finally, the information resulting from this study could directly benefit principals who have beginning teachers on staff. They would have a better understanding of how to facilitate their adaptation and support their development in their new role. This could result in a more positive, successful experience for the teachers and principals, as well as for the school as a whole.

It is important to survey both Edmonton Public and Edmonton Catholic Schools, in order to have a representative sample of all of the beginning teachers in the Edmonton area. As well, it is important to survey new teachers in the rural school boards to better represent Alberta in the study.

SUGGESTED PERSONNEL, SCHOOL AND TIMES

The following principals have already been contacted and have agreed to give their beginning teachers the option to participate in the study, pending school board approval:

(Edmonton Public Schools)

- Claudette McLean (Baturyn Elementary)
- Elvira Loewen (Forest Heights Elementary)
- Rod Kostek (Holyrood Elementary)
- Marlene Hanson (King Edward Elementary)
- Paula Crolt (Malmo Elementary)
- Usha Prochinsky (Michael A. Kostek Elementary)
- Berenice Taylor (Patricia Heights Elementary)
- Charlotte Corothers (Richard Secord Elementary)
- Westlawn (Linda Love-Walsh)

It would be very useful to have, from each school board, a list of schools that have first or second year teachers on their staff. However if one could not be made

available, the researcher would contact random schools from various communities in Edmonton belonging to the approved school boards.

Upon the principals' consent, the surveys and information letters will be delivered to each school and the teachers will mail them back in the enclosed self-addressed, pre-stamped envelopes. The survey should take between 30-45 minutes.

Only the teachers who indicate their interest in participating in a focus group will be contacted to receive further information.

ANTICIPATED PROJECT TIMELINE AND COMPLETION DATE OF FINAL REPORT

- August 27, 2001 – Cooperative Activities application submitted to the University
- September/October, 2001 – Contact principals to inform them about the study and to seek consent for their school's participation.
- November, 2001- (After report cards) Follow-up with principals, send information letters and surveys to the schools.
- December, 2001 – Focus groups
- December 2001/January, 2002 – Gather and enter/code quantitative and qualitative data.
- February, 2002 – Analyze data.
- March/April/May, 2002 – Final report and article writing.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. How will you explain the purpose and nature of your research to participants?

I will contact the principals and tell them about the study. They will then be given an information letter and packet of questionnaires for the number of first and second year teachers in their school. They will distribute them and at that point the teachers will have the option to participate in the study.

2.How will you obtain the INFORMED consent of the participants?

Informed consent will be assumed by their completion of the questionnaire. A consent form (attached) is provided for focus group participants to fill out prior to their participation.

3. How will you provide opportunities for your participants to exercise the right to opt out?

The information letter will indicate that participation in the study will be completely voluntary and that even after having given consent they would still have the option to discontinue at any time until they mailed the survey. The cover of the survey will also explain that the participants can leave out any question(s) they do not want to answer and can end at any time prior to returning the survey, at which point it would be impossible distinguish one survey from another. Their right to drop out is also indicated on the focus group consent form. The consent form also explains that after the qualitative analysis has been completed, they are no longer able to withdraw their comments.

4. How will you address anonymity and confidentiality issues?

There will be no names attached to the surveys or to the transcription of the focus groups. Further, it will not be possible, from the answers, to identify the school board from which they came. Completed surveys will be returned by mail in a sealed envelope to the researcher who will then keep all of the collected data in a secure, locked area. In addition, no individual results will be reported. The only exception would be the quoting of a comment or an open-ended response, which would only be identified by general background information such as age or years of teaching experience.

At the beginning of the focus group, all participants will choose a pseudonym and will make a nametag. Only pseudonyms will be used throughout the focus group. Participants will be instructed never to use the actual names of colleagues, schools or school boards.

5. How will you avoid threat or harm to the participants or to others?

The risk of harm and threat is thought to be minimal, however, a sheet will be distributed with the survey and at the focus group on which the names of two low-cost counselling organizations will be indicated. Participants who wished for counselling or support as a result of issues raised in this study could choose to contact them.

6. How will you provide for security of the data?

All data will be kept in a locked cabinet in my office or in that of my supervisor.

7. If you plan to use the information in other than the research report, how will you seek permission for secondary use of the data?

The consent form which the participants sign before completing the focus group and the letter which participants read prior to completing the survey, indicates that the data collected in this study may be published in a journal or presented at a conference. The participant's signature on the consent form and their completion of the survey would indicate their permission for these possible uses.

8. If you involve assistants or transcribers in your research, how will you ensure that they observe the ethical guidelines?

The person hired for transcription is currently a member of a U of A research team and knows the ethical guidelines. I would also remind him/her of the guidelines before he/she commences the task.

9. Please describe any other procedures relevant to observing the ethical guidelines.

N/A

APPENDIX E

Questionnaire Items

Questionnaire items

Adjustment to the School	
Items retained	• Becoming acquainted with the layout of the school • Meeting the principal's expectations of beginning teaching staff • Understanding the philosophy of the school • Learning school routines (reports submitted, records kept, i.e. long range plans, attendance) • Forming a link with an experienced teacher • Becoming acquainted with the rest of the staff • Making friends with members of staff • Achieving the goals of the school for my teaching subjects (i.e. curriculum, achievement exams) • Seeking demographic information about the students who attend the school (racial and religious components, family incomes and occupations, disadvantaged children etc.)
Item deleted	• Planning and organizing the extra-curricular duties in which I am involved
Adjustment to the Classroom	
Items retained	• Becoming acquainted with the contents of the classroom • Dealing with lack of equipment • Implementing the school philosophy in the classroom • Knowing how my own particular program fits in with the total school program • Dealing with class organization problems within permitted school limits • Dealing with class discipline problems within permitted school limits

- Evaluating student progress
- Preparing school reports (report cards, attendance, etc.)
- Becoming acquainted with the students I teach and their backgrounds etc.)

- Being given opportunities to see experienced teachers at work
- Having a procedure available which encourages me to discuss problems caused by my inexperience
- Being given a teaching load which reflects my training and lack of experience
- Being given opportunities to grow professionally through the provision of in-service programs
- Having a variety of teaching methods to deal with the different needs of the students
- Organizing time to cope with matters such as planning, corrections, report writing and other clerical tasks
- Preparing for parent conferences/meetings and "meet-the-teacher" nights
- Locating or ordering supplies
- Lack of congruence between theory and practice
- Co-ordinating parent volunteers

Items deleted

- Knowing how to deal with health needs or physical restrictions of students

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Adjustment to the

Field of Education

Items retained

- Having confidence in my role as a teacher
- Feeling comfortable interacting with all school staff
- Feeling that the parents recognize me as a competent teacher
- Feeling that the principal/superintendent recognizes me as a competent teacher
- Becoming an active member of the teachers' professional organization
- Becoming knowledgeable about the services offered by the Alberta Teachers' Association
- Having access to professional reading/resources

Adjustment to the New Role	
Items retained	• Accepting the restraints placed on teachers by society • Coping with the demands of administrators • Coping with feelings of frustration • Coping with feelings of inadequacy • Coping with feelings of failure • Coping with feelings of rejection • Celebrating feelings of joy/success • Coping with apprehension related to the adequacy of my professional preparation for teaching
Supervisory Practices	
Items retained	• **P.S.**-initiated evaluative visits to my classroom • Consultative or advisory visits to my classroom by my **P.S.** • Regular "drop-ins" by my **P.S.** during my class to help me develop my professional competence • One-on-one discussions with my **P.S.** to address my goals, concerns, difficulties etc • Informal discussions or "chance meetings" with my **P.S.** resulting in professional or social discussions
Administrative Support	
Items retained	• The principal supports my classroom decisions • The principal makes explicit to me his/her evaluation of the effort I am making • My principal has a reasonable understanding of the problems connected with my teaching assignment • I communicate openly and without hesitation with my

	principal • My principal shows an interest in me and in my problems • My work is appreciated and commended by my principal • My principal promotes a sense of belonging among the teachers in our school
Item deleted	• My principal's year-end evaluation/report was fair

Job Satisfaction	
Items retained	• I wish I hadn't chosen teaching • As a teacher I feel that I am well respected and appreciated • The morale of teachers at my school is high • I get a lot of satisfaction out of teaching • Teaching was my first choice as a career
Item deleted	• Overall I feel that the teacher training I went through did a good job of preparing me for the classroom

Future Plans	
Items retained	• I plan to leave the teaching profession within 5 years • My current profession is a life-long choice • If I were just starting out and could choose my life's work all over again, I would choose teaching